



## THE FIRST HAPPY NEW YEAR GREETING.

From the Earliest Ages Men Have Celebrated the Day as an Occasion for Congratulations and Good Wishes.

All nations seem to have agreed, since the memory of man runneth not to the contrary, to observe the first day of the year as an occasion of festivity and mutual good wishes. When or how this custom originated history does not tell. It antedates history and extends far back into the age of fable. Hundreds of years before the dawn of the Christian era it was being celebrated with considerable pomp in many parts of the world.

Before universal calendars had been thought of as a remote possibility and the beginning of the year varied as to date in almost every part of the world, this first day of the new year was recognized as the one great festival of the twelve months.

Tradition tells that Numa, who lived nearly eight centuries before Christ, celebrated a festival that was dedicated to Janus on the first day of the month sacred to the god. On this occasion all Romans joined together to make the day a merry one. Sacrifices were made to Janus and all mechanics and men of letters began something in line with their trades or arts. The corner-stones of buildings were laid, new enterprises were inaugurated, books and poems were commenced, and the consuls, who had already been elected, took their seats.

The ancient Greeks began the year about the summer solstice, or June 21. The Persians also began their year in June, the Chinese in March and the Abyssinians in August. The ancient people of Mexico had a calendar that had the beginning of the year in February.

Early in the history of the Roman people New Year's Day was celebrated in January. There are traditions of that age that are almost as reliable as history. To say that the day originated at that time, however, would be a mistake. Long before that period, when the Roman calendar was in such an uncertain condition that the year some-

times began in March and sometimes in April, this festival was known and celebrated.

**DRUID FESTIVAL.**  
In Northern Europe the custom of celebrating the first day of the new year also antedates all history. It was an old Druid festival that had been handed down through the centuries to be celebrated as a religious anniversary. On this occasion the priests went into the woods on the last night of the year to cut mistletoe with a golden knife. The twigs with their berries were then distributed among the people on New Year's morning and it was the popular belief that these gifts, if worn as an amulet, would preserve its wearer against the danger of battle.

From this it can be seen that the custom of observing the first day of the new year is almost as old as humanity itself. The customs of wishing each other a happy new year and of presenting gifts upon this occasion are almost as ancient. Both originated with the Romans, and from that country extended to other parts of the world. In the days of Titus Tatius, king of the Sabines, it was the duty of everyone to dismiss all enemies from his heart upon this day and to wish all with whom he came in contact a happy new year.

At this time it was also customary to exchange gifts in honor of the day, but these gifts usually consisted of a few sprigs of vervain (an aromatic shrub closely resembling rosemary), which was gathered in a wood sacred to Strenia, the goddess of strength. These gifts were called Strenae, or gifts of strength.

In the course of time this custom changed and more elaborate remembrances took the place of the simple tribute. At first grapes, honey, figs and other fruits were presented, but finally even these presents became too small to be regarded with favor.

During the reign of Augustus that

Emperor expected such gifts as a right, the custom having been a most ancient one, even at that time. When Caligula was ruling in Rome he even went so far as to issue an edict commanding the Roman nobility to make him presents of considerable value on each New Year's Day.

In Greece the New Year's salutation was almost as old as the festival itself. As soon as the day dawned crowds of people hurried from house to house crying out their wishes for a happy and successful year. At this time it was also customary that presents should be exchanged, but, as in ancient Rome, the gifts were of a simple character, bits of fruit, packages of confections or bunches of flowers.

At about the same time similar customs followed in China, although there were wide differences as to the date selected. On this holiday, however, all business was suspended, and every one felt that it was his duty to entertain as elaborately as his means would permit. On that day, therefore, visits were made from house to house, everyone made merry, and all old scores of enmity were considered cancelled. Everywhere the cry was one very similar to the "Happy New Year" salutation of our own time.

It would be interesting to know just how these customs originated, for records of them have been found in almost every country on the globe, several of which were practically out of reach of any of the Roman empire. It is somewhat a mystery, therefore, how such customs could have penetrated from one end of the world to the other. Trackless mountains and deserts or limitless oceans were no obstacle; everywhere the one salutation was heard, and everywhere men and women exchanged their gifts at New Year's.

In old England the occasion of the birth of a year was always celebrated with great festivity. Centuries ago it was the custom to enjoy an interchange

of gifts and it was no uncommon thing for the nobility to join with the officials of the State in the presentation of some valuable gift to the sovereign.

Scotland is another country that always has made a great deal of New Year's. In that part of the world the day was made an official holiday and even to-day the pomp and ceremony of the olden times have not been forgotten. At the present time, especially in Edinburgh, crowds gather to hear the bells at the old Tron Church ring out the passing year.

When the church clock shows midnight a mighty cheer is raised, hand-shaking becomes general, and the old salutation, "A happy new year," is heard on every side. On New Year's eve in Scotland it is still customary for bands of young men to go about the country singing songs suitable for the season and begging alms, which are afterwards to be distributed among the poor of the district.

While New Year's is somewhat of a religious anniversary in Scotland, in France it has been observed under very different circumstances, the day being conspicuous chiefly for the excesses of those who are observing it. In the old days in France men and women were in the habit of dressing in fantastic costumes and going about the country begging money for the "sick lady." Large gifts were given as often as possible, and, as in Scotland, the money obtained was afterwards divided by the benevolent beggars among the needy poor.

In a similar manner customs for the celebration of New Year's prevail in all countries. Some of the customs are imposing, picturesque or novel, but in almost every case the old familiar salutation is still used and the occasion is made one of gift giving.

### COMMERCIAL NEW YEARS.

In the commercial world there are New Year's days by the score, and it is not an unusual thing to find several concerns in the same building who all date their correspondence in the usual form, and according to the recognized way, but who have different days for beginning their business year.

These New Year's days, however, and the fact of their variation are the result, partly, of the nature of the business, and sometimes of the partnership agreements.

## MOST FAMOUS OF NEW YEAR DAY EVENTS.

And the Odd Seasons at Which the First of the Year Comes in Different Lands.

New Year's Day, although it does not come on the first of January in every country, is an important day upon the calendar. Some of the world's greatest events have taken place on the day which marks the advent of a new year; great men and women have first seen the light of this beautiful world on New Year's Day, others have died as the day came in; and from the earliest records of celebration we find notice of feasting and interchanging of presents as usages of the day.

Great Britain regards the first of January with historic interest, since it was on that day that the corporate union with Ireland was consummated and the countries became known under the monarchical term of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Although the Irish Parliament voted the legislative union of the Emerald Isle and Great Britain in 1800, it was not until 1801, a year later, that the measure went into actual effect and the countries became consolidated.

In our own country the first of January is historic as the day upon which President Lincoln, in 1863, issued the Emancipation Proclamation, the history of which is well known.

France has not shared the good fortune of other countries as far as having an occasion for rejoicing on New Year's Day is concerned, for the new year has dawned upon that land when the bloodiest revolution of the country was rife; and she lost one of her best kings January 1, 1315, at the death of Louis XII. He was one of the few sovereigns of whom all France was fond, and although the last few months of his life were embittered by an unhappy marriage with Mary Tudor of England, sister of Henry VIII, his reign was characterized by various reforms and improvements that made his name even to this day revered by the French commonalty as well as by Imperialists.

It was on the first of January, 1651, that Charles II. was crowned in Scotland. After the death of his father, Charles I., he was compelled to live in England, and for reasons of state as well as those of the church, the Scotch were happy to grasp the opportunity of declaring Charles II. king. But it is only just to England to add that Charles, noted for his bonhomie, wit and accessibility, after a period of intense suffering and adversity, gained his rightful possession of the English throne and ruled until his death, in 1685. Just as Great Britain and Ireland were celebrating their powerful alliance in 1801, astronomers and students of the heavenly bodies were treated to a sensation in the discovery of a planet by M. Plazzi, the Sicilian scientist. M. Plazzi, true to the love of mythology which characterizes his countrymen, named the new planet Ceres, in honor of the goddess, whom Sicilians hold in high esteem. They represent her as being the cause of the vast growths of grain and as having first introduced the art of agriculture.

Sicilian sculptors mould her in a watchful attitude, as if guarding their excellent cereals, vegetables and fruits during their development, and the most perfect statues of the goddess in existence are the handiwork of artists from the Mediterranean island. Ceres, however, as a planet, is of minor importance for, according to the best authorities of the time, is very diminutive in size, its diametrical dimensions being less than 155 miles.

**AN ANNIVERSARY.**  
Diplomats who attend the reception at the White House on New Year's Day will recollect amidst their exchanges of congratulations and happy wishes for the coming year that it is just one hundred and nine years ago that the first New Year reception was given by President George Washington. As to what the weather conditions of January, 1800, will be we are only left to

conjecture, but a contemporary periodical says that on New Year's Day, 1790, "The sun shone in rich winter splendor and the weather was more like May than that of January."

Journeying the Orient, it has only been within the last twenty-eight or nine years that New Year's Day was celebrated on the first of January in Japan. Up to that time the Japanese had a calendar based on the lunar system, but this was abandoned for the Gregorian calendar, and even now, as far as the Government year is concerned, the Japanese fiscal year begins on April 1.

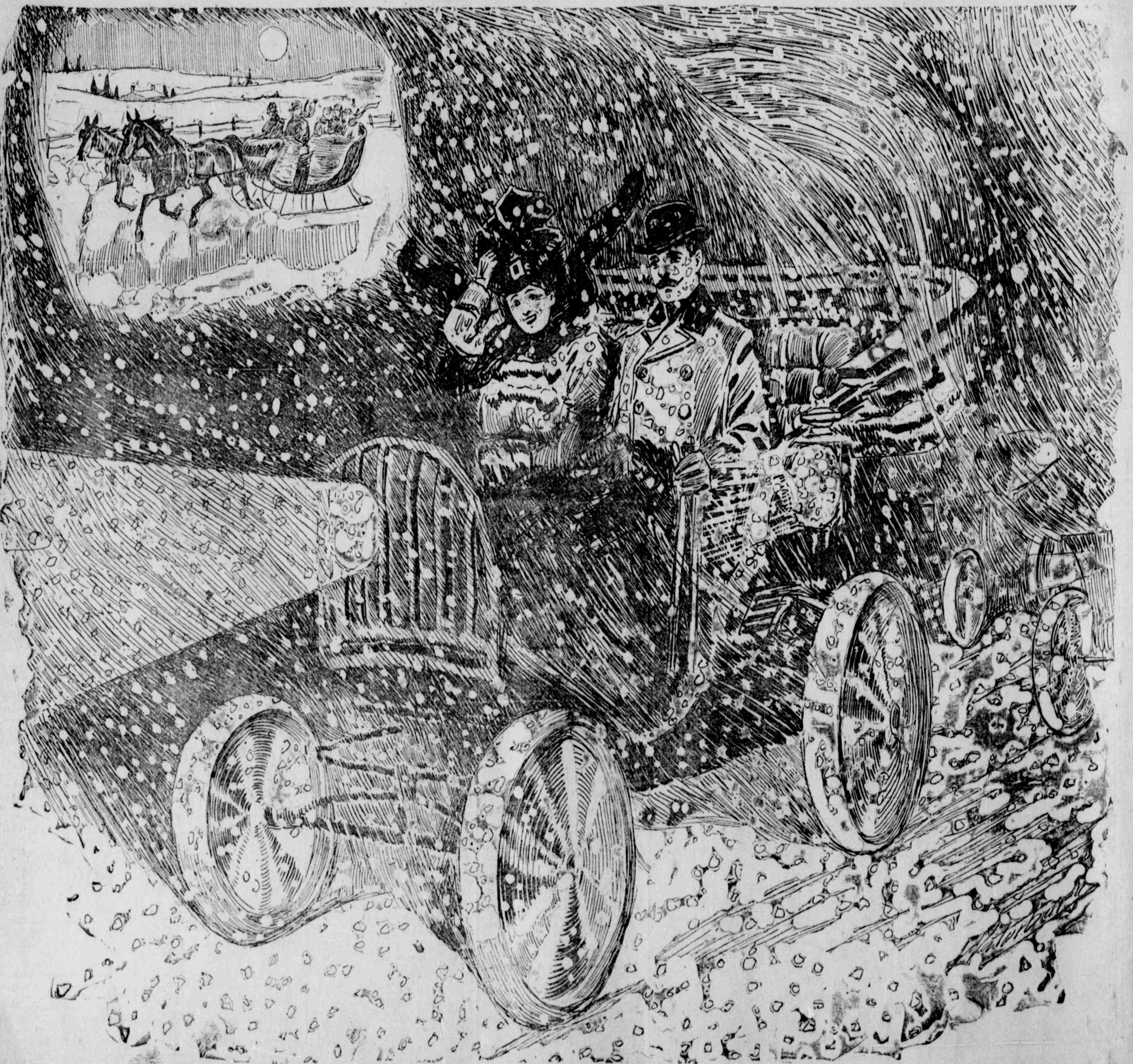
The United States Government closes its business year on June 30, and municipal, State and Federal years begin and close in many instances at various times.

The Russians, too, have a calendar of their own, and the New Year's Day of the Gregorian calendar is only recognized in cases where it would confuse matters to begin it otherwise. The Russians, Greeks and other people who are under the Czar begin their year January 13.

The Jewish New Year's Day comes in the fall of the year, that is, according to their calendar, the first day of the month of Tishre, and commemorates the anniversary of the creation. It is observed as a day of prayer and thanksgiving and for centuries has been made by the Jews a day of family reunion, when good resolutions for the year to come are adopted and when people who have departed in the year that has gone are remembered in prayer.

So the years roll away with relentless regularity, but usages remain the same, and this newspaper takes pleasure in following the very pleasant custom of wishing its readers many returns of the successes of the old year and much happiness during the new!

ONE OF THE MOST MARVELOUS INDICATIONS OF THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE CENTURY IS FOUND IN THE AUTOMOBILE, WHICH WHEELS RAPIDLY OVER THE SNOW, TOSSING THE FLAKES, AND GOING AT A SPEED WHICH WOULD PUT THE FLEETEST OF HORSES TO SHAME.



A NEW YEAR SLEIGH RIDE, AS IT WAS IN THE OLD DAYS, AND AS IT IS TO-DAY; THE HORSE IS DISCARDED FOR THE MOTOR; AND IN PLACE OF THE MERRY SLEIGH BELLS THERE IS THE CLANG OF THE ELECTRIC GONG.